

Article

Religion in the Thought of the Young Hegel

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Abstract: Religion is one of the central themes of the young Hegel. This is where intellectual problems arise, the treatment of which led him to discover his speculative way of thinking. Starting in the footsteps of Kant's ethicotheology, Hegel quickly realized that religion cannot be a vehicle for introducing autonomous morality. Under titles such as love and life, he then develops a kind of Spinozist thinking of unification of everything, including the finite and the infinite. However, it turns out that the quasi-divine performance of unity cannot be thought of as such, since thinking is bound to discursive forms of reflection that are always mediated through differences. As soon as the religious performance of unity is to be thought of, it slips away from the form of reflection. This problem can be solved if, on the one hand, the differential form of thinking is brought into a self-application and, on the other hand, difference itself is put into the performance of unity, even if it is named as absolute. The former becomes the nucleus of the figure of negation characteristic for Hegel's speculative thinking; the latter leads to an understanding of the absolute as spirit, which, according to its self-being, which encompasses difference, is always for the other and is known by the other. Religion brings this to mind in the form of imagination, according to Hegel's later concept of religion.

Keywords: religion; reflection; unity; difference; the absolute; immanence; transcendence; spinozism; criticism; spirit



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1. Ethico-Theological Beginnings and the Problem of Positivity

As with many other contemporaries who stood out positively as students, the young Hegel went to Tübingen to study theology. From his parents' point of view, he was to pursue a career as a pastor, and the path to the corresponding Württemberg educational institutions was thus marked. In 1788–1793 he was a resident of the Abbey, the most important cadre school of the Württemberg Protestant clergy. In Tübingen, on the one hand, he went through a university education influenced by late orthodoxy, but also by Württemberg pietism. On the other hand, the political events surrounding the French Revolution and the debates on Kant's philosophy also radiated to Tübingen, among others, through younger monastery repetitors.¹ Thus, life-long themes of Hegel's work, such as freedom and critique, became present. They were equally significant for political-social life as well as for conceptual thought. The authoritative patterns of piety, which were omnipresent through the spiritual exercises built into the monastery's daily life, formed a stark contrast. Yet the monastery also opened up one of the most fruitful intellectual constellations through Hegel's parlor companionship with Friedrich Hölderlin and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. It had a lasting influence on the educational path of all three friends—even and especially through their differences. In addition to the critical debates about the Tübingen educational impulses, great figures of thought from antiquity, modern times, and the present were read and discussed. The confrontation with academic theology took place in the light of Greek classics, but also Spinoza, Rousseau, Lessing and—of course—Kant. Late orthodox theology was perceived in heterodox counter-lights. Religion—which for Hegel was one of the “most important matters of our life” (Hegel 1989k, p. 9)—and its theological doctrines were discussed in contexts of politics and culture.

Without the connections with critical epistemology and social theory, artistic-poetic attempts and practical will to shape social life, the topic of religion cannot be understood in the young Hegel. As is well known, it led him on his intellectual path out of specialized theology into philosophy, from which he then claimed to understand religion in a new and better way than was possible for traditional theology. Tensions and breaks in Hegel's early intellectual concepts of religion led him to seek fundamental reorientations several times, and they finally also led him to the central elements of his later concept of philosophy. The tense relationship of the terms 'reflection' and 'speculation' circumscribes the exits of Hegel's reorientations; the constellation of terms also reveals a central systematic point of transition to the figures decisive for Hegel's later thought.

After his theological exams, Hegel did not go into parish ministry, but worked as a tutor in Bern until 1797. There he began his literary production with meditations on a folk religion, which was supposed to socially integrate moral-religious reason in the hearts of the faithful.² It was thoroughly understood along Kantian lines and was to function as an introductory vehicle of the moral law. However, in the context of his elaboration, Hegel comes more and more clearly to the insight that such a program has considerable internal contradictions. Of these, two may be mentioned. On the one hand, the very fact shows that a morality founded in reason autonomy can by no means realize itself autonomously if it requires religion as an aid. Unlike, for example, a "republican" who sets himself an end, "the realization of which depends entirely on him and therefore requires no aid" (Hegel 1989d, p. 196). The good will constituted by the categorical imperative is dependent on external aid if its realization can only be conceived through religious postulates. If it even requires a church as a planting ground, ultimately our religiously based morality of freedom is "built on dependence on the deity" (Hegel 1989d, p. 179). Second, even a moral religion does not escape the problem of 'positivity', which Hegel considered intensively and critically. As Hegel learned from orthodox versions of Christianity, a subordination of the subjective life of faith to 'positive', thus pre-given and counter-objective doctrinal contents is precarious for their self-fulfillment. Doctrinal teaching in its positivity misses its goal, the living out of faith. This is also true if the doctrinal content—as in the case of the morality of Kantian provenance linked by Jesus to his person (cf., on this motif, Hegel 1989b, pp. 205–79)—is supposed to be correct as a liberal one. Via morality and its ethico-theological conceptualization in the teaching of Jesus authenticated by his life, Hegel addresses the dilemma of the 'positivity' of concepts, which themselves as practical concepts precisely do not pass over into the consummation of their content. The critique of the folk-pedagogical moral religion and its positivity thus reveals a fundamental problem of thought. Even the "positive moral concept" standardizing the subjective living will may be capable of "losing the character of positivity when the activity it expresses is itself developed and acquires power" (Hegel 1989i, p. 6). But as a mere concept, it is precisely incapable of developing that activity as such and of giving it the power of self-actualization. This is all the more true when the moral concept takes the form of an imperative. Rather, it reinforces the structural difference in relation to its execution (cf. Dierken 1996).

2. Unification in the Mode of Feeling and Conception and the Problem of Reflection

In view of these breaks in the Kantian conception of an ethical theology orchestrated by popular religion, Hegel searches for more comprehensive figures of thought. His mental experiments lead him to the motifs of a far-reaching unification thought (cf. Timm 1979). The keyword 'unification', which already appears in a tentative form in texts from the Bern period, marks the thematic center of Hegel's texts on the philosophy of religion from the following Frankfurt years from 1797, in which he again came into close exchange with Hölderlin (cf. Jamme 1983). Hegel's meditations on love, life, and religion, originally written in Bern but then revised in Frankfurt, revolve around a concept of the "union of subject and object, freedom and nature, the real and the possible" (Hegel 1989j, p. 9). Hegel finds the key to such a program of unification, which can hardly be surpassed in its breadth of content, in love. In this way, he follows up on the motif that had already emerged earlier,

namely that man “finds himself in the other” in love—which is analogous to reason and, from its empirical character, leads into an “intelligible world” (Hegel 1989a, p. 30). Love, as the center of the subjective consummations of religion, opens up a dynamic of unification in the intersubjective that still encompasses the empirical and intelligible world. In Hegel’s intellectual development, the unification motif soon assumes a central position. ‘Love’, then ‘life’, and finally ‘spirit’ are considered conceptual dressings of this motif in the further stages of his philosophical development. In order to understand it more precisely, however, the subjective-mental forms, which are claimed in these dressings, have to be considered as well. In particular, this concerns feeling and intuition—forms that Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher focuses on in his early ‘Speeches’ *On Religion* of 1799 (cf. Schleiermacher 1984b).³ The ability to conceptually capture the unification motif and these forms confronts Hegel in an increasingly subtle way with the problem of reflection: in the attempt to think unification as such and to grasp it in conceptual form, it is measured precisely against something else and lets it slip away as such. In its conceptual determination, unification is thus measured against the negative foil of difference.

If the center of Hegel’s religious unification thought is marked by an aesthetically imagined morality, this is not exhausted in an imperative, but coincides with the connection between subjectivity and sociality. Hegel can therefore parallel morality with the happening of love. Such love is “nothing ‘limited’ or ‘finite’”; rather, an inner infinity dimension is inherent in it (Hegel 1989m, p. 84). Therefore, love is not “reason” or “understanding,” whose synthesis is always accompanied by a determining negation, but “a feeling” (ibid.). The feeling (*Gefühl*) stands for the inner infinity of love. This infinity corresponds to a dynamic of inner dissolution of boundaries of feeling that subverts differences of self and other. Behind the multiplicity of individual feelings, there is ultimately a whole. Hegel describes it with the concept of life, which is found in love itself: “True union, real love, takes place only among living beings” (op. cit.). Love becomes an organ of the process of life, which is mentally always already presupposed and claimed in every act of love: the processuality of life appears in the happening of love—and *vice versa*. Since this reciprocal relation is, for Hegel, the inner structure of reality, it has an ineluctable, as it were absolute character. Its intersubjectivity congrues with the synthesis of subject and object, freedom, and nature (cf. Hegel 1989j, p. 8f). Therefore, for Hegel, it is ‘being’ and has a divine status. Although religion as the consummation of love is the ultimate unity of life, it is presented in a roundabout way via a divine object: through “imagination” a “divinity” is brought forth, which becomes the “object of every religion” as an “ideal” (op. cit.). This brings up the problem that even the divine, if it is somehow represented or imagined, assumes the status of an objective counter-state in relation to the subjective consummation of unification in the religion of love and life. The divine thus falls into the clutches of the reflection distinction that sets it apart from everything else. Between the reality and the representation of divinized union steps the difference of reflection. With this, however, the divine is no longer what it was first intended to be: the whole. Hegel attempts to circumvent this problem by means of the form of feeling, insofar as it subverts any determining difference. In feeling, form and content, subject and object are actual indistinguishable. Therefore, feeling functions for a thinking of unification, for which the absolute becomes the epitome of all-embracing unity in acts of life and love. Intuition (*Anschauung*), too, can be understood in the sign of such dissolution of boundaries. Already in the poem *Eleusis* of 1796, addressed to Hölderlin, Hegel describes that sense, i.e., the sensual, is lost in “Anschauung”: “What I called mine fades away,/I give myself to the immeasurable there,/I am in it, am everything, am only it” (Hegel 1989e, p. 400). Intuition as well as feeling carry a non-theistic religiosity of the all-one life, which is present in manifold modifications and is found again in their love events. The conceptual characteristic of this—*cum grano salis*: Spinozistic—religiosity is, however, that the principles of the living all-unity elude the concept.

This antinomy is increasingly elaborated in Hegel’s further Frankfurt writings, but not overcome. In the probably most important fragments of the philosophy of religion of the pre-speculative Hegel, which were collected and became known under the title *Geist*

des Christentum und sein Schicksal (*Spirit of Christianity and its Destiny*),⁴ the conceptuality of life and love is further enriched by beauty and image as well as spirit and figure. The divine is imagined in images as the beautiful, and it is the spirit which is contemplated in figures. Through both, a pattern of imagining emerges that will later shape Hegel's understanding of the religious. At the same time, however, the "oneness with God" remains to the "intellect... the most incomprehensible thing"—just as, conversely, "the distance from God" is incomprehensible to the mind (Hegel 1989c, p. 273). The mystical participation, as it were, and union with the Godhead does not succeed through mental faculties close to the concept, but is connected with the 'mind' and its love-performances. In this, feeling and intuition play a role. "To love God is to feel oneself boundless in the infinite in the all of life" (Hegel 1989d, p. 231); love is the "feeling of life that finds itself again" (Hegel 1989d, p. 196). The "life looked at again" that returns to itself from fateful disunion also stands for such an inner arc of re-reference (Hegel 1989d, p. 195). However, these pre- and post-reflexive unities of feeling and intuition show fine fissures and cracks. Feeling, as can be guessed from the longing for what is lost, can also announce itself in the negative of the "loss of life" (op. cit.), and intuition fixes its image, at least momentarily. Exemplarily, the Lord's Supper shows for Hegel that the beheld elements remain mere bread and mere wine, and precisely do not make the divine present through the negation of their external form in sensual appropriation. The unification of "intuition and feeling" in the "imagination" is thwarted by the isolated objectivity of host and chalice: bread and wine looked at and enjoyed "cannot awaken the sensation of love," and the "feeling [...of] really taking in" such "looked at objects" contradicts itself in the process of their "becoming subjective" (Hegel 1989d, p. 243). In the end, it remains with the hiatus of "reality and spirit" (Hegel 1989h, p. 325). This hiatus has its reason in the insurmountable reflection: it "separates" life and must "distinguish it into the infinite and the finite"; "outside of life, in truth," this separation does not take place (Hegel 1989g, p. 260). If with this figure of thought, meant as a critique of reflection, truth is located in the outside of life, a distinction of reflection is thereby already claimed. This has the consequence that the "connection of the infinite and the finite" designated as "life itself" becomes a "mystery" (op. cit.)—and thus again the other of reflection.

Towards the end of his Frankfurt period, Hegel therefore no longer considered intuition and feeling as specific forms for the divine all-unity. They also do not visualize the consummation of unity as unity. Thus, these forms come into a structural parallel to the thought-reflection form and participate in its problem of presenting unity in forms of difference, although intuition and feeling were supposed to undermine precisely the reflection principle of distinction in the pre- or post-reflexive immediacy of their happening-actuality. In the so-called *System Fragment of 1800*⁵ (cf. Hegel 1989l, pp. 339–48), Hegel explicitly connects feeling with reflection, while intuition recedes. "Divine feeling, the infinite felt by the finite, is only completed by the fact that reflection is added" (Hegel 1989l, p. 345). But the "dwell[ing]" above the feeling reflection is only a "recognition of the same [sc. the feeling] as a subjective" (ibid.). Thus, for reflection, the opposition of the subjectivity of feeling against the objectivity of its infinite, divine content reappears. Consequently, Hegel now assigns to reflection the task of paving the way to the infinite. This is made possible by an infinite "all of life" that also encompasses the finite (Hegel 1989l, p. 343). For its path to the infinite, however, reflection now has, on the one hand, to "show finitude" in all that is "finite" in a kind of negative dialectic (Hegel 1989l, p. 345). Alongside this figure, which contains the nucleus of Hegel's subsequent methodology of immanent critique, there is, on the other hand, a positing of the infinite through the reflective procedure of opposition. However, the infinite posited in this sense—and be it also thematic in a Spinozist sense as nature or God—has "for reflection" only one character: namely, "that it is a being apart from reflection" (Hegel 1989l, p. 344). It is *for reflection-beyond* reflection. Hegel has not yet gained the insight of speculation, leading into the connection of both figures of reflection in a logic of the self-referentiality of reflection. Therefore, this divine-absolute remains intangible for his mental reflection. Only religion could 'lift' it out of the mortal and transient in some

‘elevation’ of man to the infinite and call it God. Since reflection knows life only as iterating progress of “connection of connection and non-connection” (Hegel 1989l, p. 343), religion must be lifted above reflection and philosophy must consequently cease with religion. In view of the already seen aporetics of feeling and intuition as forms of religion, and in view of their opposition to all reflection, this religion together with its God, of course, loses itself in abstraction. Reflection, however, does not fare any better in its antinomy: it exhausts itself in infinite but empty iteration, and nevertheless remains finite in its opposition.

In his system sketch, Hegel does not succeed in thinking together the supporting basic concept of life with its differentiation to nature and individuation through reflection. And as little as he can connect the concept of life with the mental operation of reflection, little is he able to bring the opposite forms of reflection, i.e., differentiation and difference of differentiation as self-application, into a transparent connection. He succeeds in this only with the elaboration of the speculative form of thought, which is introduced into a new system sketch. For both, however, the mental preconditions are ready.

3. Self-Construction of the Absolute by Systematic-Speculative Reason and Religious Faith

Already in 1801, immediately after his transition to Jena and in a renewed discourse with Schelling, Hegel confronts the unacknowledged aporetics of his earlier theories of religion by criticizing the culture of reflection of the “Western North[s]” (Hegel 1968a, p. 14)⁶ with the help of a speculative concept of the absolute. The *Differenzschrift*, in which Hegel appears, as it were, as a partisan of Schelling in the literary public sphere, understands religion as an element of the “view of the self-forming, or objectively finding Absolute” (Hegel 1968a, p. 75). This formula describes the conclusion of a sketch of a new system⁷ through the figures of art and speculation, whereby religion is subordinated to art. Whereas in art and religion the unconscious predominates, it is in speculation that intuition of the absolute appears more in the form of the activity of consciousness. However, the difference of art and religion on the one hand and of speculation on the other hand consumes itself, insofar as in both also their respective opposite is set. Therefore, both “art and speculation... are in their essence the service of God; both (are) a living intuition of absolute life, and thus a unity with it” (Hegel 1968a, p. 76). In this substance-metaphysical formula at the end of the system sketch, religion takes a double position: while at one time it stands metaphorically as aesthetic-speculative ‘worship’ for the whole of the intuition of the absolute that is identical with the absolute itself, at another time religion in a narrower sense is only a moment assigned to art.⁸

The precondition of such a systematic conclusion is the overcoming of the point of view of reflection in philosophical-speculative reason. It allows Hegel “to construct the absolute in consciousness” (Hegel 1968a, p. 9). Already from this it is evident that the concept of the absolute, which is in the inheritance of the former concept of life, does not mean something detached. It is not about a supramundane-otherworldly God. Rather, the Spinozistic character of the former ‘life’ remains. Already for this reason the construction of the absolute in consciousness cannot be a simple act of production of consciousness, on which the absolute would remain dependent as a law. Its construction in consciousness is therefore likewise presented by Hegel as a “self-construction of the absolute” (Hegel 1968a, p. 92), in which consciousness is, as it were, co-constructed *eodem actu*. This occurs, however, in a way that is grounded in the self-activity of consciousness as cognition and action. Hegel unmistakably ironizes the contrary assumption, according to which the absolute presents itself to consciousness in such a way that it “gives itself entirely to the passivity of thought, which need only open its mouth” (Hegel 1968a, p. 85f). This absolute would have to prepare itself, as it were, independently of consciousness “already for itself to a true and known” (Hegel 1968b, p. 107)—a nonsensical thought for a consciousness- and subjectivity-theoretical thinking. Thus, the activity of the consciousness of reason is not merely a passive organ of the absolute, but in its execution, it produces the absolute as—by virtue of its self-construction—precisely a non-produced thing. In this ‘as’ negative-

dialectical consciousness and speculative self-construction of the absolute coincide: both are related to each other and fundamentally form an interrelation.⁹ The self-construction of the absolute mediated by reason and consciousness can be traced, on the one hand, through the inner structure of consciousness; on the other hand, it corresponds with the systemic form increasingly determining Hegel's thought, which encompasses consciousness in relation to its possible objects. How both the structure of consciousness and its possible object relations relate to the construction of the absolute finally becomes the topic of the system's conclusion.

In view of the consciousness-performativity, the most important innovation of the *Differenzschrift* is that the moment of difference in the reflective activity is becoming linked with the moment of consciousness referring back to itself, so that in such self-reference it comes to a difference against the reflection-difference. This backward-referential self-application of the moment of reflection-difference is the elementary structure of self-referential negation, or in other words: the negation of negation as an operative basic figure. In the view of the absolute, this negation-dialectical structure shows itself insofar as reason "produces" the absolute by "liberating consciousness from its limitations" (Hegel 1968a, p. 15). It recognizes itself in its contents, and it grasps that this connection is not arbitrary, but constitutes reality. The absolute also stands for this. Reason, through its self-referential negation in the self-knowledge of the limitations of consciousness, which also includes the difference of form and content, precisely through its instrument, reflection, "becomes capable of grasping the absolute" (Hegel 1968a, p. 16), insofar as reflection "makes itself its object" (Hegel 1968a, p. 18), abolishes itself in its difference to the absolute through its own principle of negation, and thus becomes reason itself. Simply put: it must "give itself the law of self-destruction" (op. cit.)—thus negating that which is separated by itself, that is, annulling it by a kind of separation of the separating. Thereby, the reflection of the understanding becomes reason, and reason becomes speculation by grasping the inner, logical concurrence of the two completions of negation. By "daring" the "finitudes of consciousness" by their inner negation to it, reason becomes the speculation united with the absolute. The overcoming of the finitudes of consciousness is precisely that construction of the absolute in consciousness, and reason, holding both sides of this process together, "rises to speculation, and in the groundlessness of limitations... has grasped its own grounding in itself" (Hegel 1968a, p. 9). It is precisely this insight into this groundlessness that is the self-grounding of the absolute grasped in speculative reason.

However, it is not yet the foundation of the system in a self-supporting whole. For it has indeed been shown how the reflection or difference of consciousness can be annulled by self-application; and it has been shown that this is an in itself founding, *cum grano salis*: autonomous process, which, for that very reason, agrees with the absolute, in itself founding. But consciousness and its reflection appear, as it were, as something given to the absolute—divisiveness, according to Hegel, must already be there for the need for philosophy to arise at all—and the absolute shows itself in the law of reason of 'self-destruction' through reflection only as a force of negation vis-à-vis consciousness-reflection, which for its part negates unity with the absolute. According to Hegel, this force is only "the force of the negative absolute" (Hegel 1968a, p. 16). Without reflection difference, without the finiteness of consciousness, the absolute would be only an empty self-completion.

Hegel fends off this problem of abstraction in the absolute by placing intuition at the side of reflection and connecting both in the form of a transcendental knowledge. However, intuition as the "positive side of knowledge" (Hegel 1968a, p. 30) is not an empirical one; through its connection with reflection, it acquires the ability to "synthesize opposites" (Hegel 1968a, p. 30). Thus, transcendental knowledge deals not only with concept, consciousness, and intelligence as elements of the ideal world, but also with being, unconsciousness, and nature as elements of the real world. It is thus concerned with the content side of knowledge, for which Hegel takes up the Schellingian motif that consciousness reconstructs itself through the real. Thus, transcendental knowledge becomes the "objective totality" and the sphere of necessity (Hegel 1968a, p. 31), which is

supposed to correspond to the sphere of freedom and the subjective. Thus, the system's thought is in focus. It stands for the fact that the absolute "sets itself in appearance" and consequently does not "annihilate" it, but "construct[s] it into identity" (Hegel 1968a, p. 36). In the background of this motif is the thought of Schelling, to which Hegel is completely committed in *Differenzschrift*. He defends it against philosophizing according to the principles of the early Fichte. The latter only arrives at a subjective subject-object, so the artificial language borrowed from Schelling for Fichte's consistent departure from the ego, which seeks to catch up with its setting through the natural and social world itself, which is co-established and geneticized by it. Schelling, on the other hand, according to Hegel, proposes both an objective and subjective subject-object. The reciprocal polarity of nature and morality, of theoretical and practical philosophy, manifests a twofold original identity of the absolute and reconstructs its ultimate indifference. The details of this intricate conception must be left to themselves here. But from Hegel's account, a not unimportant shift in emphasis from Schelling becomes apparent: namely, a primacy of the subjective side in polarity; it provides for constructive tensions in the system. It is true that the absolute as a "point of indifference encloses both in itself", gives birth to both and at the same time "itself out of both" (Hegel 1968a, p. 77). But the claimed equal originality of identity and difference is relativized by the fact that "philosophy" leaves its right to the "separation" by setting its equal absolute with the "identity"—with which both stand at the same time in relation to philosophical thinking (Hegel 1968a, p. 79). Corresponding to this is that the "absolute itself" is, according to the famous program formula, "the identity of identity and non-identity"; "opposition and oneness are at the same time in it" (op. cit.). However, this identity or its 'is' are borrowed from philosophy. The absolute remains related to the logicity of its consciousness.

The tensions in the system are also evident in its conclusion. Hegel explicates over many stages how the objective and the subjective subject-object inversely correspond and mutually unlock each other. Transcendental and natural philosophy are supposed to hold each other in reciprocal balance as totals. But the abolition of their difference into the indifference of the absolute takes place by reflecting on their character of knowledge and science. This "view," however, is "only negative," and it does not come to the "absolute point of indifference" in which both forms are "annihilated by the fact that, united, they both exist" (Hegel 1968b, p. 93). The "original identity", on the other hand, must "unite both in the view of the absolute becoming itself objective in completed totality, in the view of the eternal incarnation of God, the witnessing of the Word from the beginning" (Hegel 1968b, p. 94). For this view, Hegel recurs to the central Christian theological motif of the incarnation of God. However, it is, strictly speaking, not a direct self-view of the absolute. It takes place for the resolution of the system—in a certain demarcation from Schelling—rather through the polarity of art and speculation as the last, dialectical complexity encompassing and reducing forms of consciousness and knowledge. For their polarity is to represent the conclusion of the system.

As already indicated, the third limb of Hegel's later system's conclusion figures religion, with its inner faith contents, as assigned to art as a dependent moment—as much as the religious motif of God's incarnation guides the system-concluding view of the absolute. The downgrading of religion to a dependent moment of art has—beyond the Schellingian influence—a systematic reason. For Hegel has come to the insight that the primary subjective form of religion, faith, is an ambivalent and fractured form of consciousness. In this, the problem of reflection is ultimately not overcome, but perpetuated unrecognized. Therefore, in the system sketch of the *Differenzschrift*, religion enters into the cultic figure of a "Gottesdienst[es]" (worship) that is performed philosophically, as it were, namely through art and speculation (Hegel 1968a, p. 94). This can be described almost mystically as "living intuition of absolute life, and thus oneness with it" (op. cit.). The philosophical cultus inherits and surpasses, as it were, that of religion and its faith.

In this philosophical cultus, speculation ultimately prevails, despite the fundamentally emphasized polarity of it and art. In this asymmetry, the peculiarity of the subjective

human consciousness in the context of the system conclusion is subcutaneously brought to bear. In its fine structure, art stands for the side of the unconscious and of being in this view of the absolute; speculation, on the other hand, stands for consciousness and becoming. The outstanding unity of both, however, is asymmetrically accomplished only on the part of speculation, in that the latter [knows] how to take for itself the “preponderance which consciousness has in it” (op. cit.). This, however, is done most indirectly, namely, by positing becoming and being, freedom and nature “as the original absolute being,” more precisely: presupposing it—a being that “can only become insofar as it is” (op. cit.). But this original absolute being is no longer available to speculation itself. It recognizes itself as a side of the absolute, which as transcendental philosophy also deals with the knowledge of nature, but precisely not with nature as nature. And it has the absolute in that it knows about its inner “limit,” recognizing its “incapacity” to “abolish itself through itself...” (Hegel 1968b, p. 95). In this knowledge of its limits is preserved, *cum grano salis*, a criticalist motif. Hegel reinforces this when he concludes by having the intellectual intuition (*intellektuelle Anschauung*) of the absolute occur in the duplicity of a subjective and an objective transcendental view, thus combining not only a rhetorical homage to Schelling, but now also to Fichte. Both intuitions are antinomical to each other and yet are set *eodem actu* in the absolute. This can only be done by speculative reason encompassing the reflection of reflection. Nevertheless, such reason itself remains antinomic. For it considers the unification of the members of the antinomy as truth and thus stands in contrast to simple reflection, which sees only contradiction in the antinomy. And yet, in this “truth” as “absolute[m] contradiction” only “both are set and both are annihilated,” it is “neither both, and both at the same time” (Hegel 1968b, p. 96).

Thus, the conclusion of the system sketch proves that the system is just not conclusive. Just when the absolute and consciousness are speculatively thought together, their difference shows. It can be thematized on the side of the absolute as well as on the side of consciousness. The latter is the case when consciousness explicates the absolute in the forms of the conditioned and in the knowledge of its limitations. For this, the absolute is the inner ground of possibility. By standing for the coherence of absolute and explication under the conditions of the conditioned in such activity of consciousness, the absolute itself comes into difference with respect to its self-identity.

Hegel’s new conception of speculative knowledge enables him, in principle, to explicate the content of religion, which he had earlier named with the keyword ‘unification’, without exposing it to the aporias of the difference of reflection. But the speculative transformation is also accompanied by a critique of the form of religious consciousness as faith. As already indicated, according to Hegel’s analysis in the *Differenzschrift*, faith is a “relation of limitedness to the absolute” in which “only the opposition (*Entgegensetzung*) [is] in consciousness, whereas there is a complete lack of consciousness about identity” (Hegel 1968a, p. 21). Faith is a “relation of reflection to the absolute,” which describes the divine only in the form of an object and sees in a speculative abolition of the opposition between it and the absolute only a “destruction of the divine” (op. cit.). Nevertheless, faith is not merely opposed to the absolute. As “immediate certainty,” it is in fact also “identity itself” and therefore “reason” (op. cit.). The absolute certainty is nothing other than the absolute itself, accomplished at the place of human subjectivity. But it is this only, conscious and formless. Therefore, it is not able to recognize its character itself. What is recognized on its ground remains “accompanied by the consciousness of opposition”—and thus undermines certainty (op. cit.). Although faith claims to be certainty of God and thus undermines the difference of consciousness, this difference reappears the moment faith expresses God in the form of a representational object. If the consummation of certainty wants to form a knowledge of this consummation, the consequence is to transfer the religious consciousness of God into a speculative unity with the philosophically conceived absolute. This requires a momentary negation of the form of consciousness of faith. Through it, the self-referentiality of religious consciousness becomes comprehensible as it is founded in the absolute, which for its part is self-referential. Without that negation, consequently on the fixed state of

consciousness, the difference of the consummation of absolute certainty and the knowledge of the consummation of the absolute achieved by Hegel cannot be conveyed. This is the religion-theoretical consequence of the transfer of the reflection opposition into speculative reason. This is the nucleus for Hegel's later philosophy of religion's characteristic theorem of the so-called *Aufhebung der religiösen Vorstellung in den philosophischen Begriff*, that is, lifting of the religious concept into the philosophical concept.

The theological consequence of religion is accompanied by a theo-logical one. If the religious God-consciousness must be negated in the form of faith, so that the absolute can be adequately grasped, then also the God presented by this consciousness in the form of reflection is to be negated for the sake of the absolute. For the God of religious consciousness is not the absolute. From the reflection as form of the religious faith consciousness also the religiously in form of an object thematic God is concerned. Therefore, it is necessary to abolish the God imagined in representational objectivity into the speculatively conceived absolute. The conceptual pattern for this lies ready in the figure of the self-construction of the absolute in knowledge, which negates with the religious God-consciousness in the form of faith also the religiously objectified God. However, Hegel's speculative theory of the absolute does not content itself with this religion-critical result. Due to the fact that it can be described as 'religion' in the broader sense of the philosophical cultus of the incarnation of God itself, it is later able to give a philosophical existence to religion in a narrower sense as well. But for this, systematically, at least two consequences of Hegel's concept still have to be unfolded. One consists in the fact that via the antinomy in the system conclusion in the relation of intuition and reflection, of transcendental and natural philosophy, the always at least momentarily occurring asymmetry in the relation of consciousness and absolute is caught up in thought. Thus, in a certain inheritance of Kantian criticalism, the perspectivity of consciousness is marked in its peculiarity *sub specie* of the absolute: this is the absolute precisely for consciousness, its being-for-itself is not absorbed by the absolute—without prejudice to the figure of 'self-destruction' or negation. However, this requires—and this is the other consequence of Hegel's concept—that in the absolute itself difference becomes thematic. This is, in substance, already connected to the reflection of reflection—in which the figure of the negation of negation resides—as an element of the self-construction of the absolute. But difference also wants to be set at the place of the self-reference of the absolute. The difference in the absolute is accompanied by the fact that it is not exhausted in the mere being-for-itself. Rather, it is as itself also for others: namely for consciousness, for whose being-for-itself the absolute is also as other. Exactly this is the basic figure of the spirit: a being for oneself and for oneself that is at the same time being for others. It is not difficult to find motives reformulated in it, which were described before with love and life—but remained intellectually uncatchable.

However, in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel does not—yet—have a conceptual form that allows to explicate the absolute as spirit. Therefore, in the following years in Jena, Hegel experimented with various systematic figures that attempted to conceptually explicate the exposition of the absolute as spirit in the *Differenzschrift*. In the system drafts that emerge in rapid succession but remain unpublished, the architecture of the system is concerned with the question of its conclusion. In this question, the antinomies of the system concept from the *Differenzschrift* is further negotiated. In addition, material from natural and social philosophy is incorporated to an increasingly greater and more complex degree. The fact that Hegel's first major publication is not one of the announced system concepts, however, but the *Phenomenology of Spirit* from 1807¹⁰, may have to do not least with the theme of the certain special position of consciousness and its perspective, which was also already discussed in the *Differenzschrift*. The tension between phenomenology and system that is connected with this can be seen in Hegel's entire path of thought.

4. Incarnation of God versus Reflection Philosophy of Subjectivity—And Hegel’s Early Controversy with Schleiermacher

In the following years of Hegel’s development, the topic of religion recedes further. Epistemological and natural-theoretical as well as moral and social-philosophical topics are in the foreground. Even before that, religion was only one topic among others, especially from the environment of state and law. Religion, however, remains an object of Hegel’s thought, and there are also neitherholt systematic shifts. Hegel did not give prominent attention to the topic of religion again until 1821, at the zenith of his effectiveness in Berlin. Hegel’s lectures on the philosophy of religion, which he delivered in Berlin in 1821, 1824, 1827, and 1831 in four different forms, were supposed to be his answer to the understanding of religion as a ‘feeling of par excellence dependence on God’ of his theological colleague Schleiermacher, which the latter had systematically explicated in his *Glaubenslehre* (*Doctrine of Faith*)—this is the misleading programmatic formula of Schleiermacher’s theological *opus magnum*, published for the first time in 1821/22 (cf. [Schleiermacher 1984a](#); 2nd edition, [Schleiermacher 2003](#)).¹¹ It is misleading because Schleiermacher was also concerned with freedom. The dispute between Kant’s heirs, rich in polemics and deliberate misinterpretations, was about dependence versus freedom as the substantive center of the religious, and feeling versus imagination as its mental form (Cf. [Dierken 2023](#)). The dispute from the Berlin years had a longer prehistory, which—after Hegel’s distancing from his own efforts on feeling and intuition as subjective forms of religion—began in Hegel’s Jena years. In *Glauben und Wissen* (*Faith and Knowledge*) from the *Kritisches Journal der Philosophie* (Critical Journal of Philosophy) of 1802, Hegel included a brief discussion of Schleiermacher’s speeches *On Religion* in the section devoted to Friedrich Heinrich Jacobi, though without explicitly naming the author (cf. [Hegel 1968d](#), pp. 313–414).¹² Schleiermacher, he argues, potentiated Jacobi’s principle of a subjectivity that, while alive and infinite in itself, remains in the mode of yearning in relation to an overarching infinite. Thus, the characteristic of recent Protestantism of seeking “reconciliation in this world” ([Hegel 1968d](#), p. 391) is taken to extremes: The divine-infinite is made present by the subjectivity of single individuals, which actually remains in the finite. Thus, the divine-infinite itself becomes a beyond of this world, although it is already claimed in this. Whereas Jacobi’s conception of the divine-infinite as an unattainable, other-worldly, and divine Other is a misnomer, Schleiermacher has “torn down the partition between the subject or cognition and the absolute unattainable object” (op. cit.). His beyond is at the same time at his side, his ‘universe’ does not stand opposite subjective consciousness in its various processes, but rather becomes manifest in these itself. This distinguishes Schleiermacher from Jacobi, who, against Spinozistic consequences, only offers an intuitionistically packaged difference principle of ‘faith’ in a beyond. In contrast, Schleiermacher knows a “subject-objectivity of the intuition of the universe” (op. cit.). Thus, Hegel basically confirms the speculative character of Schleiermacher’s thought—measured against Hegel’s own categorical criteria. Schelling’s artistic formula of ‘subject-objectivity’ refers to an absolute that is capable of difference, but at the same time is superior to it, and the intuition related to the universe has a trait of intellectual potentiation—be it in the sense of the intellectual intuition inspired by Kant and Fichte, the execution of which transcends all discursive differences, or in the sense of Spinoza’s ‘third kind of cognition’, which as intellectual love of God completely aligns itself with the inner, as it were, divine principles of the natural world order and completes itself in its immanent morality.

As much as Hegel recognizes the fundamentally speculative character of Schleiermacher’s concept, he also sees this as being again undermined in favor of remaining in the this-worldly-finite. While Schleiermacher’s alleged “subject-objectivity of intuition” is fundamentally speculative, intuition, however, “remains a special and subjective thing” ([Hegel 1968d](#), p. 391). Schleiermacher ties it back to a rather arbitrary multiplicity of individual religious acts. Their spectrum is characterized by the endpoints of an ‘inspiring’ religious virtuosity and an arbitrary “atomistic” of responses ([Hegel 1968d](#), pp. 390–2). According to Hegel, by transferring the speculative of his thought into sociological and psychological

figures, Schleiermacher comes up with an inconclusive abundance of asymmetrical—and consequently contingent—constellations that resemble the “figures of a sea of sand exposed to the play of the winds” (op. cit.). The virtuosos accentuated their idiosyncratic particularity by presenting the intuition of the universe in arbitrary-special refractions, and the ‘congregations’ of the recipients of their effusions each formed their own ‘little congregations’ in highly fluid formations. Their changing constellations do not reveal a universal shape, but only an infinite series of modifications and remodeling without a general principle. For Hegel, this is the sociological counterpart of religion to the conceptual fact that the intuition of the universe is “made subjective again” (Hegel 1989i, p. 393). For Hegel, Schleiermacher represents a subjectivistically overstretched variant of the reflective-philosophical relation to the absolute, which is characterized by explicating the structure of a final, admittedly always already claimed synthesis, which is named under the title of the absolute, not as such in its consummation and consequently out of it, but only in particular, finite and subjectively broken shadings. In contrast to religiously unbiased faith, which surrenders itself completely to the absolute while losing its reflexive knowledge mystically, as it were, faith tainted by reflection philosophy is precisely a form of consciousness that knows the relationship to the absolute only in the form of difference and forgets the identity claimed for itself—a motif known since Hegel’s critique of the form of faith from the *Differenzschrift*. Thus, Schleiermacher remains with a mere “seeking of longing” (op. cit.). The fact that Hegel’s critique of Schleiermacher concentrates on the form of intuition, which ostensibly remains in isolation, and ignores the form of feeling, which in Schleiermacher is complementary and preflexively undercuts all differences, reveals how much Hegel’s discussion of Schleiermacher is also a self-commentary on his own earlier efforts in the philosophy of religion under the sign of the figures of intuition and feeling.

In his critique of Schleiermacher, Hegel hints at the contours of an alternative he favors. It is a matter of making religious individuality nameable “under the body of an objective representation of great figures” and of transferring its lyrical expression into rememberable “general speech” (Hegel 1968d, p. 392). It is a matter of ‘Gestalt’ (form) and ‘work’ and not only of fluid aesthetic-religious consummations. Hegel can even speak of the “objectivity” of a general church linked to the morality of the state (op. cit.).¹³ Although such turns of phrase also involve a transformation from the objectivism of the old dogmatics, it remains striking that Hegel moves the performance structure (*Vollzugsstrukturen*) of subjective consciousness out of focus. They can be thematized precisely as a moment of the content side of religion, which in an undogmatic sense has as its content the incarnation of God. In the Fichte part of *Glauben und Wissen*, Hegel indicates the outlines of an economic-trinitarian understanding of Christianity as a contrast to and surpassing of the reflective philosophy of subjectivity. According to this, religion contains for finite nature a real redemption, “whose original possibility, the subjective in the original image of God,—its objective, however, the reality in his eternal incarnation,—the identity of that possibility and that reality, however, is resolved by the spirit as the oneness of the subjective with the incarnated God” (Hegel 1968d, p. 407). According to this, the Christian religion itself contains the structure of the spirit, which brings the subjectivity of religious consciousness into unity with the God who became man. This unity, however, is not a difference-free immediacy. Rather, it is about a being-in-the-other of God and man, and *vice versa*, insofar as both have taken up the difference of otherness into their being-in-themselves or being-for-themselves.

With this figure, a symmetry of God and man, of the absolute and his knowledge is basically indicated. It was already conceptually exposed in the philosophical cultus of the system sketch of the *Differenzschrift*. It remains open, even with this symmetry achieved via the content side of religion, how to deal with the perspectival difference of consciousness and content that re-emerges with its articulation, which already showed up in the tensions in the system sketch of the *Differenzschrift*. These tensions determined Hegel’s further path of thought in Jena. In addition to the critical writings devoted to the problems of reflection, Hegel devoted himself in Jena above all to the further development

of the system form—and at the same time worked out the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, which pursues precisely the constellations of consciousness. We shall examine this next.

5. Tensions in the System and the Absolute as Spirit

In the years after 1801, Hegel worked continuously on the reconstruction of his system conception, in which religion was also assigned its place. The reconstructions virtually amounted to a new conception. However, during this time they did not reach any result that would have been worthy of publication in Hegel's eyes. Instead, a series of critical writings were published in which Hegel applied the methodological arsenal of the negative dialectic of reflection to a wide variety of systematic positions with increasing virtuosity. It is about an immanent critique of the limitation and conditionality of the respective authoritative point of view. The implicit prerequisite is the “idea of philosophy”, which allows Hegel to expose with the insight into the conditioned at the same time the subterranean relation to the absolute (cf. Hegel 1968c, pp. 115–94). However, Hegel did not succeed in explicating the absolute in the system form at that time. As is known, the first form of the system appeared only in the Heidelberg period in 1817. The *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in the Compendium*, i.e., the form of the mature system, which in turn was changed in its later editions (cf. Hegel 1989f, 1992), however, did not follow up on the great work at the end of the Jena period: the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, published as the first part of the *System of Science*.¹⁴ This system remained a fragment; further parts did not appear. And the later published system explicitly places the set of topics called ‘Phenomenology’ only in its third part, the “Philosophy of Spirit”. In 1807, on the other hand, the *Phenomenology* was intended to provide an introductory lead-in of consciousness to the speculative system standpoint, not the system in its system form—although the *Phenomenology* of 1807 presents much of the material of systematic natural, social, and spiritual philosophy. The specific method of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, on the other hand, consists over long stretches in the immanent critique of consciousness in relation to its objects. In this it claims at the same time to present the absolute in its appearance—at least ‘in itself’ or ‘for us’, the philosophically initiated readers.

With this systematic constellation of critique and construction, of consciousness and absolute, differences to the system requirements of the *Differenzschrift* of 1801 are connected. A further difference is added: the concept of the absolute is no longer described as identity, which admittedly corresponds with non-identity, nor in a reductive approach as indifference, which productively sets two subject-objects out of itself through primal division. Schellingian and, to a certain extent, Hölderlinian inspirations step back, and a pneumatological motif pushes forward in contrast. The absolute is explicitly understood as ‘spirit’ in *Phenomenology* (Hegel 1980, p. 28). Its being-for-itself consists in being for the spirit, thus being present in the other of itself and thus being mentally consummated through this other as self-knowledge in otherness. This mental consummation is, according to the constitution of consciousness, not without objective representation. Therefore, the absolute appears in the dialectic of consciousness and its objects. The theoretical or natural-philosophical figures contained in it are lifted into practical or social-philosophical constellations and are surpassed by them. Morality becomes the primary element of the spirit, and the subjectivity of consciousness, in its asymmetrical relation to its objects, is transferred into intersubjectivity—which basically tends to symmetrical relations without prejudice to an abundance of permanent newly breaking asymmetries, depending on the degree and form of the naturalness entering into moral relations. Historical power and domination structures, the relations of the sexes and generations, the production and exchange of things, political orders of different interests, for example, can be mentioned here.

Hegel sought to develop for his own systematic conception in the Jena period the preconditions of this new distinction of spirit as a unity of the infinite and the finite, of the absolute and consciousness in manifold alternating relations of selfhood and otherness. The systematic concepts were drafted in the context of his Jena teaching activities and have remained fragments. The early fragments on a *System of Speculative Philosophy*, written

around 1802/03, contain primarily the philosophy of nature and culminate in remarks on the spirit as the summit and turning point of nature (cf. [Hegel 1986](#)). The manuscript *Logik, Metaphysik, Naturphilosophie* of 1804 begins, like the mature system of the *Encyclopedia*, with a logic in which the categorial structures of knowledge are presented as such, at least in a rudimentary way (cf. [Hegel 1982](#)). The metaphysics that follows includes cognition, objectivity—which, according to Kant’s ideas, includes the soul, the world, and the supreme being—and, under the title of subjectivity, basic elements of the philosophy of the ego, consciousness, and spirit. Spinoza’s concept of the absolute, standing in self-referential self-preservation, Leibniz’s *Monadology*, and the latest subject-theoretical drafts are processed by Hegel in partly enigmatic formulas. The structure of spirit based on the reflection of reflection becomes increasingly recognizable. However, even in the chapter on the absolute spirit, the absolute is not, as in the *Phenomenology* of 1807, the spirit. Conversely, in 1804, “the spirit... is still the absolute” (cf. op. cit., 188). According to the logic of the speculative proposition, in this formulation the predicative absolute determines the spirit, but not, as later, the spirit the absolute. And the spirit is also not an absolute for itself; it does not recognize itself as absolute spirit. This may well be the reason that the 1804 manuscript follows the philosophy of absolute spirit with the philosophy of nature and ends the system with it. In contrast, the manuscripts on the *Philosophy of Nature and Philosophy of mind* of 1805/06 contain the philosophy of nature and the philosophy of spirit (cf. [Hegel 1987](#)). The latter includes, as the concept of spirit, the structure of subjectivity as intelligence and will; as real spirit, the social and legal relations of recognition, contract, crime, and law come up; and under ‘constitution’, basic elements of an estates theory of the state are explicated, followed by the components of the later conclusion of the system in absolute spirit: art, religion, and science. In this final part of the ‘Constitution’, the spirit brings forth a “world which has the form of itself” ([Hegel 1987](#), p. 253). This is the basic structure of the subsequent absolute spirit, which here was still located in the objective one. The world brought forth by the spirit in spirit-form is also apostrophized as “intuition of itself as itself” (op. cit., 235). Here, Hegel transforms the intellectual intuition of the systematic conclusion of the *Differenzschrift* of 1801. Although intuition in a narrower sense then belongs to art, in 1805/06 the structure of the self-perception of spirit in its absolute form is decisive for all three elements, i.e., also for religion as the incarnation of God into spirit that is remembered and universalized in the conception and finally for science, which here, however, does not include the speculative philosophy of the concept, but world history. This marks a difference from the concept of absolute spirit of the *Phenomenology* that emerged contemporaneously, which articulates the “self-consciousness of spirit” in the forms of religion, art subsumed to religion, and absolute knowledge (cf. [Hegel 1980](#), p. 495). A difference also appears between the draft of 1805/06 and the later system. It corresponds to the earlier Jena draft in the sequence of the forms of the absolute spirit, but separates them from the objective spirit.

The conceptual differences also point to a systematic problem of the later Hegel: namely, the emptiness of content of the system-concluding pure philosophical philosophy, which in fact comprises only a methodological recapitulation of the contents previously explicated in consciousness—or spirit—philosophical dialectics (cf. [Hegel 1992](#), p. 393f). In this, philosophy does follow the principle of reflexive self-penetration of the relationality of all relations determined by differences and opposites. But the price to be paid for this is that in the highest and last explicative form of spirit the difference of otherness fades away. For although the spirit is always supposed to be for the spirit, thus gaining its selfhood in otherness and *vice versa*, paradoxically, in the last form, which corresponds perfectly to the spirit, that difference tends to fall away, on which the difference of the other hangs.

If one wants to draw the systematic consequences from the work-genetic problems and combine this with a proposal for the appropriation of Hegel’s thought, there is much to be said for explicating the system as phenomenology—and the spirit in the dialectical relations of consciousness, morality as well as the inner reflexivity of their cultural symbolization, including religion. The absolute spirit becomes thematic in its appearance in the guises

of subjectivity, sociality, and symbolic representation. But such a reverse-speculative phenomenology cannot become a self-supporting whole already in view of its starting point; it needs reformulating, catching up in the system. It only has to be open, in its central transitions as well as in its conclusion. The tensions, which are also found in the system of the mature Hegel, allow such an appropriation aiming at opening. For the systematic foundation of such an appropriation lies in the “highest definition” of the absolute from the system’s philosophy of mind: “The absolute is the spirit” (cf. Hegel 1992, p. 29). This might contain a veritable offer to religion in the beginning age of its critique.

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Notes

- ¹ On Hegel’s early years, see Vieweg (2019, p. 56ff), Jaeschke (2010, pp. 3–19) on the phases of Hegel’s life focused on here (with further lit.). This volume also describes the backgrounds and contexts of Hegel’s writings considered below (each with further lit.); the relevant sections are easy to identify.
- ² Recent research has shown that the texts of the early Hegel, first published in 1907 by Hermann Nohl under the title ‘Theologische Jugendschriften’, are in a different chronological order; also, the impression that Hegel was primarily occupied with theological questions is already inaccurate in view of the weight of political studies. Factually, this corresponds to the fact that Hegel discussed the topic of religion early on also from the perspective of its social formations. Cf. Schüler (1963); Jamme and Schneider (1990); Jaeschke (2020).
- ³ Cf. further Lange (1993); Dierken (2015).
- ⁴ The heading on these text volumes, written between 1798 and 1800, is secondary; the arrangement series also goes back to the editors and has recently been changed. This applies especially to the presentation of the Jewish and Christian religions.
- ⁵ The description of these texts as system fragments is secondary. See also Zhang (1991).—The so-called *oldest system program of German idealism from 1796/97* shows a clearly different character than Hegel’s contemporaneous texts by Hegel and is presumably a joint work together with Schelling and Hölderlin.
- ⁶ With the so-called *Differenzschrift*, Hegel made his public debut in the philosophical El Dorado of Jena, to which he was able to move in 1801 due to an inheritance: Hegel (1968a) ought as reflective philosophy, Hegel may also have meant his own earlier efforts. This becomes virtually a topos for Hegel.—Cf. on *Differenzschrift* also Jaeschke and Arndt (2012).
- ⁷ On the importance of systems thinking in Hegel and its various developments, see Dierken (2018).
- ⁸ The importance assigned to art by the *Differenzschrift* in the conclusion of the system is probably due to Hegel’s adoption of Schelling’s concept. During the following time in Jena, Hegel then developed the sequence of art, religion, and philosophy that was decisive for his later conclusion of the system. Religion, however, retains a dual position until the conclusion of the mature system: in the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in the Grundrisse* (1830), on the one hand, the whole sphere of the ‘absolute spirit’ is called religion “in general,” although, on the other hand, religion forms only its middle member (Hegel 1992, pp. 366, 372ff).
- ⁹ If it still forms a form of knowledge around itself, Hegel will later explicate this in the logicity of the concept of spirit.
- ¹⁰ This great work of Hegel’s is available in numerous editions: The critical edition is Hegel (1980).
- ¹¹ § 9.2 (cf. the context §§ 8–10); more differentiated in thought, changing God as the object of the feeling of dependence to an expression of his ‘Woher’, in the 2nd ed. (cf. Schleiermacher 2003) § 4.4 (cf. the context §§ 3–6).
- ¹² The passage on Schleiermacher’s *speeches* is found 391–393.
- ¹³ In this motif Hegel’s early interest in a connection between religion and moral social forms lives on.
- ¹⁴ On the relationship between phenomenology and system, see also Jaeschke and Arndt (2012).

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